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Strictures on Mr. Hamilton's Inquiry into
Genuineness of Ms. Corrections in Shakespeare
Folio, 1632 - 1860

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STRICTURES
ON
MR. N. E. S. A. HAMILTON'S INQUIRY
INTO THE
GENUINENESS OF THE MS. CORRECTIONS
IN
MR. J. PAYNE COLLIER'S
ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE, FOLIO, 1632.

BY
SCRUTATOR.

"Ficta omnia celeriter tanquam flosculi decidunt."—CICERO.

LONDON:
JOHN RUSSELL SMITH,
36, SOHO SQUARE.

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STRICTURES, &c.

PLUTARCH wrote an Essay which was meant to demonstrate the benefits a man may receive from his enemies. Had the author of the pages about to be reviewed ever had an opportunity of perusing the argument, his peculiar notoriety as a modern Aristarchus—now that mankind has somewhat tardily insisted upon the observation of the adage, *Audi alteram partem*—would most probably not have been courted under its present guise: and if Mr. Hamilton had wished to raise the celebrated “Perkins folio” a step higher in the estimation of many, he could scarcely have devised a surer method for so doing than the publication of his “Inquiry.”

Those who take the least interest in Literature—a wide term be it observed—though they may not claim to be comprehended under the title of *litterati*, can scarcely view the cause for which the gladiators are at this present moment so fiercely contending in the arena of *Les belles Lettres*, without a certain degree of interest. A controversy,—every day growing more famous as its vast importance makes itself sensible, assuming various aspects and shapes as fresh combatants enter the lists,—a controversy such as the title of this pamphlet will explain, can hardly be brought to a satisfactory conclusion without revealing disclosures which may be unwelcome to the parties concerned, though of incalculable interest and moment to the public, before whom they have laid their case.

Dr. Pangloss, who sought to instil into his pupil's mind the elements of that philosophy which maintains that everything is for

the best, would probably have suggested,—less in pædagogal than monitorial spirit—that eminent literary personages might have taken more time for consideration before they waged so bitter a war of words as the last few months have seen; their pens should have hung for a time encased in the sheath of mature judgment,—a sheath which would then have

“Added graceful terror to the wearer’s side.”

Having, however, in haste pronounced judgment, they now, unfortunately,—as their *impartial* decision, after both sides had been thoroughly heard, would have been very valuable—stand committed; and the world has to form an opinion upon evidence which cannot be dispelled or distorted by a sudden stroke from the magic wand of any modern Circe.

I must presume,—the ephemeral nature, and consequent brevity, of *brochures* such as the present precluding the possibility of recapitulating all the minutiae of the subject proposed to be treated of—that my reader is tolerably conversant with the main facts of the case; and that any lengthened summary of them here would be but a puerile imitation of the manner in which the pages I am about to review have been made to assume the aspect of “a book.”

The various elements that sway the human breast have been successively displayed in different guises for the edification of the spectators of this literary dispute. Of *dramatis personæ* there are many; wits, of Longbow and Strongbow-kind,—“these by the heart, those by the head.” One is inspired with a *furor loquendi*, another with an unmistakeable *cacoëthes scribendi*; a whole clique here muster in serried phalanx to assert the *pros*, whilst a giant in stature hurls back the *cons*. We fancy ourselves living in Charon’s city of bees, “where every bee had a sting, and they did nought else but sting one another.” *Suum cuique*: bystanders gratulate themselves, that if the contest is destined to have an end, it must be resolved into an *argumentum ad iudicium*, and common sense, speaking by that dreaded *vox populi*, will pronounce the decision.

Many, whose prejudices are as crooked as their spines, will

doubtless have prejudged the question. They who have only read the accusation will cry out, *O tempora! O mores!* Some while they uphold "with stubborn soul" their injured champion's cause, will close their ears to the plaintiff's counsel. Others more cautious,—*pendente lite*—will be sceptical as to the scientific researches of those who boldly pronounce with sweeping accusation long received documents as spurious, and be inclined to class such "pronouncements" among the different *deliramenta doctrinæ*, or wild speculations of learned men.

But to commence our survey of this wonderful book; Shakespeare's physiognomy on the cover invites our further investigation. We read and read, till such a tale as is here unfolded, and withal in so few pages,¹ sends a shiver through our frame, and distant visionary glimpses of the gallows, and the great literary malefactor swinging slow with sullen mien in obedience to the ropes tightened by palæographical hands, begin to float before us. Mr. Hamilton had promised (Times, July 2, 1859) the literary world this treat: *ergo*, to act *malâ fide*, and doom our expectation to disappointment, could not be thought of. Six months rolled by, when at length the lightning flashed, and the thunder followed. The mountains laboured, and lo! "the book" received its birth. Well! *Jacta est alea*: and the increased or diminished palæographical reputation of Mr. Hamilton and others will depend upon the denoûment of the Great Shakespeare-Hamilton-Collier-Perkins-Folio-Question.

But this has not been a monod sung by Mr. Hamilton; a stately *minuet* has been well sustained by eminent critics and literary men—"trifling authors and heavy commentators"—on both sides; and the leading periodicals of the day have lent them their space to execute their figures, *pas seuls*, and *pas d'ensemble* from column to column. All praise to the promoters of this Inquiry for investigating a question which it was perhaps their peculiar duty to do; and all due deference to their judgment: yet surely the manner and means employed have scarcely been consonant with the feelings of

¹ 43 pp. only—including Preface—out of 155, being original matter.

liberality and *bon accord* which ought to prompt one Christian to act towards another: nor was the heinousness of the deed to be pleaded as an excuse for precipitancy when the crime had not been proved.

The apathy with which this most important question has been treated, not only by the public at large, but by men who ought to be the first to institute a Commission of Inquiry, is incomprehensible. How are we to move them into action? Perhaps an endeavour to explain the presence of the pencil may cause a further investigation, and a fuller statement by its impugnors, and additional and new reasons by scientific men, who are not tainted with partisanship, for concluding that the ink writing in all these documents is spurious and by the same hand.

In the Preface of the "Inquiry," the author says he "thinks that we should not easily be forgiven if we strove not to hinder the works of one of the greatest minds that ever adorned humanity, having their grandeur defaced or their purity stained" (pp. 5, 6). The hint has been taken. I do not wish by any attempt at scholastic ratiocination or philological acumen to overwhelm my auditory in confusion; but if it be only a *vox et præterea nihil* that is heard, its office will be to keep ever present the under-plot: and, while noting the series of events that proceed collaterally with the main story of the play, may, by pulling the minor strings of the marionette performance, help to further the cause of elucidation.

My starting-point, or as diplomatists would say, my "point of departure," shall be the MS. corrections in the said folio. And I pray the reader to take into consideration that the *onus disprobandi* is far more burdensome than the *onus probandi*.

The objections to receive the emendations as authentic are as follows:—

1. The presence of "a series of partially obliterated 'pencil corrections' throughout the margin of the Folio,—*corresponding* with the corrections made in ink, and sometimes *actually underlying* them." (Inquiry, p. 24.)

2. The pencil marks and words underlying the antique-looking corrections in ink,—and the pencil marks and words in near neighbourhood to the same mark or word repeated in ink in the antique hand—are all in a modern and the same hand ;¹ and the ready detection by the naked eye of the fact that the pencil has been written *prior* to the ink. Also chemical operations have determined that some of the pencil letters and words are *beneath* the ink. (Inquiry, pp. 25, 26.)

3. The “strange anomalies in the form of the letters, especially the capitals, in the ink corrections on the margin, yet evidently written by one hand throughout” (Inquiry, p. 23).

4. The ink itself is a modern compound, and is often of a different shade. (Inquiry, p. 24.)

The presence of the pencil no one who has examined the book lately, at least with the aid of a glass, has denied. It is strange that Mr. Collier, Mr. Netherclift, Sen., and the late Duke of Devonshire, either with the naked eye, or by the aid of specular appendages, did not discover them ; but Mr. Hamilton appears to be great in micography : or, as the ancients would have expressed it, *maximus in minimis*. His detection of the pencil marks was followed by the somewhat hypothetical announcement that these pencil marks and words—both those underlying the ink corrections *as well as* those by themselves on the margin—were executed by *one* and a *modern* hand. Now it is evident that a gentleman of Mr. Hamilton’s undoubtedly rare abilities could not have argued that because there were pencil words in a cursive hand underneath the ink that therefore the ink writing which was in “a stiff old Chancery hand” was feigned and of a recent date : he expressly states that it was the “tampering,” “touching up,” “painting,” “dexterous alterations,” “exaggerations,” and “strange juxta-position,” &c., &c., of the ink letters, that led him to doubt their genuineness. (Inquiry, p. 134.)

Taking, however, for granted that the facsimiles appended to the

¹ Sir F. Madden uses a more guarded expression ; he says, (Letter to “Critic,” March 24, 1860, p. 358) “in an apparently modern hand.”

"Inquiry" be substantially correct, for be it remarked, *en passant*, that the faithfulness of these has been seriously impugned by eye-witnesses,¹ it would be uncharitable to leap to a conclusion that the emendations were placed there *fraudulently*, before due examination of various reasons for submitting that most of the facsimiles may be explained in a satisfactory manner, and quite within the bounds of *possibility*.

Let us assume, in the first place, that the Folio was once in the possession of some person who lived in the seventeenth century. Some refer the corrections to Burbage, some to Francis Perkins. The name of "Thomas Perkins, his booke," found on the cover, would indicate that he was some descendant or relative of Richard Perkins, a celebrated actor who lived in the beginning of that century; which would tally with Mr. Parry's statement that his uncle, Mr. Gray, obtained the copy at the sale of the Perkins Library. (See "Fraser," May, p. 735.) This also seems to throw some light on the conflicting evidence as to the sale and purchase of the folio, and it now appears the one mentioned in Mr. Rodd's Catalogue of 1847 was disposed of elsewhere. The copies of the second folio are, I believe, not very scarce.²

The text of the Folio is undoubtedly very incorrect, (or, as printers would term it, "foul,") letters in words being by the carelessness of the compositor in setting up the types turned upside down, &c.; these have been struck through with the pen, and the *corrigenda* placed on the margin: the punctuation has been frequently altered, and various other technical errors noticed, all pointing to the evident conclusion that the corrector, whoever he might be, was preparing the volume for a *reprint*. The volume might once have belonged

¹ See "Edinburgh Review," April, 1860, pp. 472, 473, and Note; "Atlas," March 24, 1860, p. 232; "Notes and Queries," March 24, 1860, p. 232; "Saturday Review," April 21, 1860, p. 496; "Athenæum," Feb. 18, 1860, p. 230, &c.

² Dr. Wellesley, Mr. Parry, and Mr. Collier cannot agree as to dates; this unfortunately tends to give the suspicious an additional anchor. As regards the alleged improbability of Mr. Rodd not seeing the notes in the folio, it is more probable that as Mr. Collier did not discover them for two years afterwards the former had no notion of their presence: or surely he would have not parted with the book at so low a price.

to a play-house. It was the custom to alter parts, scenes, and speeches to suit the present moment. Pope says he saw a quarto "which had the parts divided into lines, and the actors' names in the margin, and several passages added in a written hand, and which are since to be found in the folio."

To account for the evident corruptness of the text will scarcely be necessary here; two hundred and thirty years ago the art of printing in England was comparatively in its infancy, and, as is the case now, inattention on the part of the compositors will frequently lead to the most curious mistakes in their compositions, which are not always, even at the present day, detected by the persons appointed to read the proofs. The Old Corrector, being doubtless aware of this, contemplated correcting this copy of Shakespeare which he found so corrupt before he submitted it to the printer for the sake of reprinting it. He imitated in fact the first publishers of Shakespeare's collected plays, who told the public that they offered them "Cured" from the maimed limbs made by impostors. But, as many of the more important emendations of the text are not to be found in any other Folio as yet come to light, I should be less inclined to think that he made his corrections *wholly* from earlier or the different existing editions of the day, or that he took his book to where Shakespeare's plays were being performed and there made most of his alterations, than that he did so partly from memory, from his own private judgment, and from a knowledge of what Shakespeare had actually written: and supposing him to have been born about the year 1590, he would have had ample opportunity for hearing what Shakespeare had written most correctly spoken. A disquisition on the reasons why Shakespeare and other authors of his day were averse to having their works published would be out of place here. Heminge and Condell, Shakespeare's fellow-managers, first published a collected edition of his plays in 1623, seven years after his death, the text of which Mr. Dyce and others have ably shown was very corrupt.¹

¹ The corrections in the folio 1632, are often made to agree with the reading of the

But before the Old Corrector made his corrections in ink (we will assume for the moment its archaic character), he, like other authors of his day, inserted first some of his corrections in pencil. If, as would be, in a large volume like the present, almost a matter of necessity, he made them at *different times*, as opportunity allowed, it will be easy to understand that ink not always being at hand, pencil would therefore be sometimes used; and also as he would make them in *different places* the ink would naturally vary a little as to colour and thickness; the various "touchings up" here and there would be nothing more than might be expected from a man persevering in such an arduous undertaking. All this, I submit, is possible.¹

It has been alleged that the pencil marks and corrections *actually underlying* the antique-looking ink corrections, and those on the margin near the ink, are executed by one hand throughout, and "have no pretence" (Inquiry, p. 135) to antiquity about them either in form or spelling. This statement simply amounts to an *argumentum ad captandum*; for the form of several letters and syllables under the ink could very justly lay claim to having been written in the natural hand of the Old Corrector, whilst other pencil words, separate from the ink, are so obviously modern as to deceive no one. A critic in "Notes and Queries" (March 24, 1860) quotes an instance in *Cymbeline*, p. 400, col. 1 (quoted in "Inquiry, p. 134) where the word "Cliffes," which is written in *pencil* on the margin as an emendation of the word "Oakes" in the text, is in as old handwriting as a second emendation, "Rockes," in ink.

4tos. Many of the literal errors reprinted in the text of the folio 1632, and emended by the Old Corrector, are also in the earlier folio 1623. I have heard some remark on the singularity of so many of the corrections agreeing with what several of our eminent Shakesperian commentators had suggested: it is surely less to be wondered at, that these critics should have, in the course of so many years, stumbled upon "some of the true readings."

¹ Lord Ellesmere's folio, where the ink corrections are, according to his lordship, but contradicted by Mr. Hamilton (Inquiry, p. 71) in a "totally different handwriting to the folio 1632," exhibits the same characteristics—pencil being detected in some places beneath the ink.

But this is not correct. The word "Cliffes" was originally written in *ink*, and has been half erased by the Old Corrector, and "Rockes" substituted on the opposite margin. There is no trace of pencil in this alteration.

But even supposing many of the pencil marks to be in a more modern-looking handwriting than the ink, it has been very satisfactorily demonstrated and acknowledged that such cursive handwriting, especially in pencil, was not infrequent in the middle of the seventeenth century.¹ The error in some people's judgment seems to have arisen from taking for granted that because certain pencil words and parts of words in the margin are undoubtedly by a modern hand, that *all* the others are so likewise. In fact they are looking at one thing whilst thinking of another: it was the player's fault, who "looked on the earth when he implored the heavens, and to the heavens when he addressed the earth."

In facsimile No. 1. of the Inquiry, the correction "Enter F &c.," is written clearly in pencil by the side of its counterpart in ink. It may have been written in a modern hand. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 (both), 13 and 14 are, to the best of my belief, all in a modern handwriting; and the reader will observe that all these corrections are on the white margin, *distinct* both from the text and the *ink corrections*. They can be accounted for in several ways. A modern reader (I will not say Thomas Perkins, or any of his relatives or friends, I will say Mr. Jones of the nineteenth century), like thousands of "modern men" would, on reading the folio merely for his own gratification, instruction, curiosity, or use, in most of the cases enumerated, be likely to be somewhat puzzled at the curious looking forms of many of the old letters in the ink emendations: for there are few men, comparatively speaking, that possess the advantages for deciphering old words that the gentlemen of the British Museum connected with the MS. Department do.²

¹ A writer in the "Critic" (March 3, 1860, p. 264) asserts that pencil marks rubbed out will, after a lapse of time, *reappear*: this we know is not impossible. In 1861 the pencil marks in question may be still more legible.

² I must here remark that the ink writing on the facsimiles in Mr. Hamilton's

Mr. Jones, therefore, either to save himself further trouble hereafter, or (it matters not much which) to guide future readers, or perhaps intending to copy the Corrections out clear for printing or otherwise, wrote in pencil—for he would not surely damage the work by touching it with ink,—as it would appear in a hasty manner, the indistinct word, in most cases I have mentioned, *by its side*, merely as an *explanation* of what the Old Corrector had written. Mr. Hamilton says, “*in obedience* to which the Old Corrector has made his emendations” (Inquiry, p. 135). But he cannot prove this: as the ink is not written *over* the pencil in these cases. A glance at the facsimile page will make my meaning perfectly clear. I very much doubt if Mr. Jones ever dreamed, in making his “pencilings by the way” of any others lurking in their neighbourhood; or if he did, whether he could have succeeded in bringing them into such notoriety as they have now been. In No. 1. the “ter” of the word “Enter” was evidently the stickler with Mr. Jones, for he merely put “F &c.” in pencil for the rest of the ink correction, not considering it necessary to rewrite the whole of it. It will be answered that the forger wrote the pencil first as a remembrancer, or suggestion, to guide him in making his ink alterations afterwards. But the reader will see that there is an *outer* and *inner* margin, on each side of the page, caused by the printed black line that runs round the text: and it is to be remembered that the pencil word is generally written on whichever margin the ink one does *not* occupy. If these were the Old Corrector’s pencil words, he would have most probably written his ink *over* them, as in fact he appears to have done in many instances.

But Mr. Hamilton says “that pencil sentences and notes occur *in Mr. Collier’s handwriting* throughout the margin,” (Inquiry,

Inquiry is doubly, if not trebly, as clear and legible as that on the facsimiles made by Mr. Netherclift, Sen., of a page of the said Folio prefixed to Mr. Collier’s one volume edition of Shakespeare, 1853. Many of the corrections, indeed, are scarcely visible to the naked eye. Many, as said before, are literal errors emended: which very naturally accounts for the omission (Inquiry, p. 32) of some by Mr. Collier.

p. 150); that "the ink corrections in obedience to the pencil corrections, and also the whole of the forgeries treated of in this volume have been executed by one hand." (Inquiry, pp. 85, 135). Now some statements always superinduce others of a darker complexion: and here is indirect charge against Mr. Collier of forgery—a dangerous word withal: like the torpedo, its touch benumbs.

First, as to Mr. Collier's handwriting. He himself says, (Letter to Times, July 1859) "that if there be upon the volume any pencilings by me, beyond crosses, ticks, and lines, they will speak for themselves: they have escaped my recollection, and, as I stated in my former letter, I have not seen the book for several years. Perhaps the microscope used by Mr. Hamilton might discover that the plumbago of my pencil was the same as that of other marks, said to be in connection with some of the emendations" (Inquiry, p. 152). Now I maintain that they *do* speak for themselves, and very distinctly too. *Where* it is not difficult to be seen: but the evident fact that two if not three people have been using their lead on the unfortunate folio has not unnaturally furnished ground for suspicions. There are 1st, The faint pencil corrections in the cursive handwriting of the Old Corrector; 2ndly, The modern glosses and explanatory comments by Mr. Jones; and 3rdly, The naturally still plainer words in Mr. Collier's handwriting. And hereon hangs the tale. The first were undoubtedly made to *guide* the Old Corrector in making his ink corrections. The second were emanations from the brain of Jones; and the third from a head which, according to his antagonists, is *not* an adept in reading (Inquiry, pp. 90, 91), nor a hand in copying, old MSS., although of which antique writing it is roundly asserted they must have been the authors.

But with regard to Mr. Jones, some people will possibly be led to inquire who such a person could be. Now it may not have occurred to many that the folio was out of Mr. Collier's hands for some years before the pencil marks were discovered: and why should it be

thought a thing impossible that the late Duke of Devonshire, whom Mr. Collier "had seen day after day looking over the emendations," had made his comments on the margin of his own book? There was nothing culpable or extraordinary in his so doing: it is an every day occurrence. And thus Mr. Collier's surprise at hearing of the voluminous nature of these pencil corrections can easily be understood.

In facsimile No. 2, the x of the two letters "Ex" at first sight appears a "z." In No. 3 the peculiarity of the final letters "ng" in the word "Going" account for the explanatory pencil. The initial "G's" of both pencil and ink words look, indeed, as if executed by the same hand, and might lead to a hasty suspicion of forgery. All I can say is, that ninety-nine in a hundred, jotting hastily down words as I conclude these pencil ones to have been, would make a "G" as it is made in the pencil, especially with the easy form of the ink "G" close by the side: the eye sometimes adopts, as it were, the form of an object it rests upon, as you see a boy on his slate making a 6, 9 and particularly an 8, like one that may be next to it, however unaccustomed to form it that way; and the two "G's," in the present case, not being *peculiar* in form, but both remarkably easy and offhand, can hardly justify the suspicion that they were executed by the *same* hand: the *ink* G's moreover are generally made alike; the *pencil* ones (see facsimiles 3 & 4) are not so.

In No. 4 the pencil corrections are in character with those of No. 3, and need no comment, the dissimilarity between the pencil and ink writing being at once visible: though on the *white* ground of the facsimile page this word seems to be pretty clear, and the only one that could not have greatly tasked Mr. Jones's or Mr. Collier's ingenuity.¹

No. 7. There are two words in pencil here to one in ink. The

¹ If the reader may wish to satisfy himself as to the correctness of my observations regarding the difficulty of reading "easily" the ink writing in this celebrated Folio, he has but to obtain access to the volume and judge for himself. And this is a point would lay particular stress upon. But if he cannot do this he may have a better chance of

line in the text stands thus: "Sing in your sweet lullaby." The Old Corrector had scratched through the word "in," and substituted "now" in ink on the inner margin.¹ Mr. Jones on reading the line did not feel quite satisfied with its emendation, and put "us now" in his pencil on the outer margin as reading better: many might not be inclined to agree with Mr. Jones as to the judiciousness of the alteration, though it is possible Shakespeare may never have written the line as it is: but this alteration does not suppose a forgery. Jones had evidently no reason for rewriting "now" by itself in pencil as an explanation, the "now" in ink being clear enough: the *us* was the point. He certainly had no right to emend Shakespeare according to his own notions. I repeat, however, that no proof of forgery can be distilled from this, for Mr. Collier has not printed, mentioned, or even hinted at, the word *us* in any of his editions. Mr. Collier states, too, that "he has not made the slightest addition to the notes either in pencil or in ink." No one in fact charges him with *adding* to them.

No. 8 is merely an explanation of the word "wall," as the ink word is not so clear as it might be, the quite *white ground* of the facsimile page being a bad representation of the real state, dark appearance, and colour, of the leaves in the old folio.

Nos. 9 and 11, especially the word "over" in No. 11, as also the

seeing the *facsimile* prefixed to Mr. Collier's one volume Edition of Shakespeare, 1853, or that of his "Notes and Emendations; and let him endeavour, on first reading, to decipher the line—which the context shows is wanting—inserted by the Old Corrector in Pucell's speech: especially the *second* and *last* words. He will observe also the wholesale erasure or rather crossing out of five lines beneath, full of names, of no use when the play was being acted; a proceeding which would scarcely have entered into a modern Corrector's or forger's brain (see p. 17).

¹ The pen which has drawn a line through the word "in" in the text seems to have been dipped in a darker, or a blacker ink than the other corrections on the margins. This word, which evidently makes nonsense of the sentence, the Old Corrector had marked through, and not knowing what to substitute, probably left it until he made the body of his corrections in the browner ink. He then substituted the word "now," writing it on the inner margin. Or, when he had written the word "now" he may have forgotten to erase "in" in the text, and did it when he noticed it some time afterwards in, not unnaturally, a different-shaded ink. I have seen ink, which had been kept in a metal stand, turn a pale *brown* on paper within a month.

word "armed" in No. 13, speak for themselves. Mr. Jones would hardly be expected, had he perused the volume two or three times, to be familiar with the, to modern eyes, eccentric e's, p's and v's used in MS. writing two hundred years ago: or Mr. Collier for the sake of transcribing hereafter the corrections for printing might have jotted it down. Probabilities and possibilities might be multiplied before the charge of forgery should be pronounced. With regard to the word "armed" it is curious that it had been inserted by the Old Corrector in a MS. note in the same Act, Scene 1, when the Ghost first enters. The Old Corrector at least was consistent.

The pencil word "begging" written in an unmistakeably modern hand, in No. 14, is not difficult of explanation. Mr. Jones was naturally perplexed at the word "faining." If he did not make a guess, he probably looked it out in his dictionaries, and not finding it there—at least so as to suit the sense here—Spenser using the verb only in the sense of "wishing earnestly"—made a gloss, comment, or suggestion by the side, writing in pencil "begging." It was no bad shot either. The Old Corrector might have been going to make a remark in writing when he saw the word, and made some scratches in the brown ink to draw attention to it, (as may be seen in the facsimile after the letter "g")—but somehow or other did not.¹ Of course it is quite possible Mr. Collier might have put this gloss, but which I very much doubt for reasons I will state hereafter: it is more likely that Mr. Jones, seeing the Old Corrector's mark, tried to interpret the word "faining" and wrote the explanatory or suggestive word "begging" in pencil by its side: and if the reader will refer to the context, he will see that the word "begging" would not be at all unlikely to have suggested itself to his mind, when trying to make a meaning for "faining." Mr. Hamilton himself says (*Inquiry*, p. 136) that the Old Corrector had "struck out" the entire passage from "Why should the poore" &c. to "something too much of this,"—proving the Old Corrector's

¹ These scratches are explained in page 21. The facsimile is incorrect.

determination to reject what he could make nothing of: for why did he not alter it? there are his marks after the "g." Maybe he cut it out to shorten the speech, as he seemed very fond of doing sometimes, utterly regardless of beauties or fine passages, as if he were adapting the play for being acted in a shorter form; and indeed the very numerous stage directions and other inexplicable eliminations, &c., favour this supposition. (See p. 14, Note.) Mr. Hamilton's argument is, that (Inquiry, p. 136) the forger having struck the passage out, was thrown off his guard, and neglected to copy over in ink the pencil word "begging" &c. But it is just as possible that Mr. Jones would not much care whether the Old Corrector had struck it out or not, and read the passage through, out of curiosity to see *why* he had so done. The word "faining" naturally drew his attention, and thus accounts for the gloss "begging." Nor did Mr. Collier think much about the Old Corrector's elimination of the passage, for he has printed it *in extenso*.

Had Mr. Hamilton taken the trouble to examine each grave statement he made before he sent his "pronouncements" flying on the wings of the "Times" to the four corners of the earth, he would not have fallen into the mistake of supposing that the word "begging" was "placed there evidently with the intention of superseding the word *pregnant* in the text" (Inquiry, p. 136). There would have been no object in altering the word "pregnant": it would have been an unnecessary tampering with the text. There *was* an object in putting an explanation to the undoubted misprint "faining" (as the 4tos give "fawning") caused most likely by the reporter *mis-hearing* what was spoken on the stage, or by the carelessness of the compositor, and not detected by the readers for the press. It is amusing, too, to see the writer in "Fraser" (May, 1860, p. 727) following in the wake of Mr. Hamilton, and solemnly devoting a column to an argument meant to show the dulness of the Old Corrector in putting such a gloss for "pregnant." Mr. Collier also has failed to detect their mistake; for in answer to Mr. Hamilton's remark he says "what is gained by it (the gloss)?"

it must have been written in the margin as an explanation, and a bad explanation too if it refer to pregnant in the text." The Reviewer in Fraser proceeds then to dilate upon the *force* of the word "pregnant" &c.

Thus we cannot suppose Mr. Collier to have written this word "begging," for he casually notices the misprint "faining" in his Editions of Shakespeare, not saying anything leading us to suppose he was ignorant of the right word "fawning":—but the person who wrote "begging" evidently could not have known that it ought to have been printed "fawning."¹

The candid reader will I think, agree with me, that this example Mr. Hamilton has adduced does as much damage to his cause as it does to that of Mr. Collier.

There are four more examples I have to mention, Nos. 5, 6, 10, and 12. No. 5 can scarcely be seen: it may be Mr. Jones's emendation of a line that he thought halted or lacked another syllable, like the line in No. 7; there are no peculiarities to be remarked in the three indistinct words: they may be in the Old Corrector's cursive handwriting: not being *under* the ink, no forgery could be proved from them.

No. 6 makes also for my conjectures. The Old Corrector had crossed out the *i* of the word "straines," and substituted on the margin, in his brown ink, "nge," the "e" being anything but distinct. Mr. Jones or Mr. Collier, to make every thing appear clear,—to elucidate, in fact, the Corrector's correction—has written the whole word in pencil so as to make the "nge" read "strangeness." Or there is another as equally possible explanation, and perhaps the better of the two; the Old Corrector may have written "nge" in pencil first, then over it the "nge" in ink. Mr. Jones, for the sake of distinctness, wrote in front of the ink correction, in pencil, the

¹ Mr. Collier's note (1858) is as follows:—

Where thrift may follow FAWNING.] So all the 4tos (excepting that of 1603, where no word of the kind is met with) but the folio 1623 misprints it *faining*, which word is left in the Corr. fo. 1632.

letters "str" (observe also he has inadvertently left out the "a"), and then after it "ness," thus making the emendation read "strangeness." My observations will be better understood by referring to the facsimile page of the "Inquiry."

No. 10 contains the awful word "body," one of the test words which have failed to establish, on internal grounds, the spuriousness of the emendations. If Mr. Jones wrote this word, the want of space in the margin would naturally account for its cramped appearance. If the pencil *underlies* the ink, then the Old Corrector had in the first instance spelt the word with a "y;" this is more likely, as we find many instances, one in the same page, where he has used "y" for "ie," and *vice versa*. Mr. Hamilton's argument (Inq. p. 135) as to the motive for the insertion of the word "dead" is preposterous.

The last example, No. 12, need occupy us little time. The letters are so indistinct that either the Old Corrector or Mr. Jones may have been using his pencil here. If the Old Corrector, of course they underlie the ink, if Mr. Jones, they must be superposed. The Gentlemen of the Mineral Department of the British Museum could best decide the question.

As regards the MS. Corrections in the folio 1623, some of them are *printed* in the later edition of 1632; the corrections of the same word in the two folios are not always made to *agree* with each other. This does not look much like forgery.

I have based my arguments up to this point on the supposition of the facsimile page in the "Inquiry" being correct: but I must not allow my readers, the generality of whom will not have an opportunity of seeing the folio itself, to form their judgment on the merits of the case on the supposition of this facsimile page being wholly correct. I cannot therefore refrain from recording my own opinion on the appearance of the folio, and offering a description of the pencil and ink writing as seen by the naked eye and with the aid of a strong glass. I will commence with the pencil first. The only example given in the facsimile page of the

"Inquiry" where the ink overlies the pencil is No. 12. There should have been more of such examples given. This writing the reader will see is of a different character to the other pencil words: it does not resemble Mr. Collier's handwriting; and in no case where I discerned pencil underlying the ink was it more plain, more legible, or in a more modern handwriting than that in facsimile No. 12. No particular care has been taken to *cover* pencil corrections with the ink; several I noticed were but half covered: but that any one acquainted with Mr. Collier's handwriting should have connected these pencil words with his own bold, clear, and rather peculiar, though seldom variable, writing which appears here and there on the margins, seems incomprehensible. Mr. Collier's words have never been attempted to be erased: and they are merely helps for reference when he was printing his new edition of Shakespeare from the folio. There are his long crosses and ticks,—all very visible—to draw his attention to any alteration or passage that he might wish to print. There are his plain pencil lines enclosing or marking off several lines of the text, all of which he has admitted, in as plain language as could be wished, *were* his own. No one who opens the book will fail to see at once that these pencil marks "speak for themselves."

The very faint pencil marks under the ink occur more rarely than is generally supposed; they do not underlie the longer ink corrections, and have no appearance of having been erased except by time. (I have a book before me in which some pencil writing is barely visible, though only written seven years ago.) The Old Corrector must have had his pencil by his side while looking over the volume at different times, and most probably made a few alterations in his own natural hand; I say a few, in comparison with the many ink emendations, the number and peculiarity of which are marvellous.

I also observed numerous "notes of interrogation"—put for queries—in faint pencil on the margin, formed very differently from the one in facsimile 14. Beneath the word to which they drew attention was generally a small pencil dash. These notes of inter-

rogation are of a somewhat antique form, and one or two I noticed were made the wrong way, the convex side being to the left. That in facsimile 14 is evidently a modern explanation of the ink alteration in the text after the word "heare," where the comma has been made by the Old Corrector into a note of interrogation, but has more the appearance of a 2.

The other pencil words are plain enough: they are the explanations of the ink corrections, and sometimes merely glosses. The words "armed," "begging," "God," &c. (see facsimiles) are just legible on the margins. These I have referred to a supposed Mr. Jones; they do not resemble Mr. Collier's handwriting, nor are they nearly so clear as his.

With regard to the facsimiles appended to Mr. Hamilton's "Inquiry" not only are they, as has been remarked, "restorations rather than facsimiles," but some are unfaithful to the originals. No. 14 is enough to puzzle any one. Why were the brown ink marks placed after the word "faining"? How came it that the full stop is so far from the letter "g"? A glance at the folio soon shows the fault in the facsimile. After the word "faining" a note of interrogation is *printed* in the *black* type of the text. The Old Corrector put two strokes in his *brown* ink through it, then placed a stop (in *brown* ink, of course) after it, and made a note of interrogation after the question "Dost thou heare?" The pencil word "armed" in facsimile 13, is not so clear in the original, the top of the "r" has indeed entirely disappeared. The word "armed" in ink again is not so legible as the facsimile would have us believe.

As regards the ink, Mr. Maskelyne proved it to be a "kind of paint formed perhaps of sepia and indian ink:" which no one seems inclined to dispute. In the days when the Old Corrector is supposed to have lived, many people were accustomed to make their own ink, and as the emendations must have taken some time to write, the fresh mixing, addition of water, &c., and two or three revisions of the corrections would account for the different shades of the ink. In some places it is thick and shines, in others it is dull

and thin, and often it penetrates to the other side of the page: at the beginning of the folio some has been spilt and smeared, and has here especially the appearance of a kind of paint mixed with ink. A sharp quill seems generally to have been used: for where the nibs have been divided very widely in a thick stroke, no ink remains on the paper but the two sharp outside lines of the stroke.

Several of these ink emendations have been partly erased in different ways. A penknife has done the work in some cases, and often has scratched through the paper, making a hole. In other cases a mode of erasure has been adopted, which is not so easy to explain. From the smooth appearance of the paper (the surface not having been rudely disturbed or peeled off, as would be the case in the use of bread or otherwise), this as yet undiscovered mixture seems to have been washed out by means of the sponge: a slight stain round the erased word, and sometimes a crinkled appearance of the paper favour this suggestion. Some of the washed and half scratched out words look something like pencil writing. The word "Cliffes" a critic in "Notes and Queries" (see above, p. 10) mistook for such.

The Old Corrector has evidently gone over his work two or three times; this accounts for the erasures, and second emendations. Numerous letters, not very clearly written in the first instance, he has touched up or finished off; some of which "touchings up" (objected to by Mr. Hamilton, Inquiry p. 134) were very naturally made in an ink of a different shade to that used in the earlier emendations.

As regards the alleged "rubbing out" of the pencil corrections, it did not appear to me that any one had ever attempted to make away with them: the older ones have been half obliterated by time. One critic innocently talks of india-rubber being in use in England in the seventeenth century; he evidently only wanted to bring in a weak witticism where he quotes Shakespeare's words "Ay, there's the rub." One is inclined to ask him, *Where* is the rub?

Thus I have attempted to show that none of the pencil corrections

need invalidate the genuineness of the ink corrections. All these *interpellanzas* may be explained rationally. If Mr. Collier had printed, or even hinted at, some of the *additional* pencil corrections which do not appear rescribed in ink, it would cast a shade of suspicion on him: even then he could only be charged with suggesting a new text; the *ink* emendations could not be impugned on that ground. It remains to ascertain, if possible, the alleged modern nature of the ink itself,—which at present has certainly not been done to general satisfaction,—in order to establish on *external* grounds the charge of forgery which has been advanced.

They who do not pretend to palæographical knowledge cannot advance opinions on the antiquity of the ink writing that will have much weight; but if the presence of the pencil words, and the “astounding results of their investigation” (Inquiry, p. 135) may have convinced some that a forger has been at work, others may in calmer reason arrive at an opposite conclusion.

Mr. Maskelyne says (Inquiry, p. 145), “In several places the pencil stops abruptly at the ink.” Mr. Jones or Mr. Collier, if they intended their explanations to be of any use, would not continue their pencil marks, or write, over the ink, if they could possibly avoid so doing. It stands to reason then that these pencil words must have been written *last*. Also he says “I have nowhere been able to detect the pencil marks clearly *overlying* the ink,” which proves that neither the Old Corrector, Mr. Jones, or Mr. Collier wasted their lead or time in such an unreasonable procedure. After all that has been said about the fainter pencil marks, Mr. Maskelyne (Inquiry, p. 145) terms them only “as still traceable,” the microscope “revealing particles of plumbago in the hollows of the paper.” (Inquiry, p. 144.)

But if Mr. Collier were the forger, and wrote *all* the pencil marks, it is curious that he should not have said anything about “four short-hand words” which are written in pencil on one of the margins of “*Coriolanus*.” Mr. M. Levy has, we are told, interpreted them to mean a “stage direction having reference to the

scene" (Critic, March 24, 1860, p. 357). It is not likely such a suggestion would be left out, or unprinted, by the forger: though it is more probable that the Old Corrector should have overlooked the words in writing in his ink emendations. Mr. Levy "cannot find them to have been used before 1774," and cannot find that they were not. The *date* of the ink corrections, however, is another matter. It was the "indirect charge against Mr. Collier of forgery" that it concerned us to examine first. It is scarcely likely that a forger would make an alteration in pencil in *capital letters*, and write by its side in ink its counterpart in *figures*, as is the case in Hamlet, p. 276; nor that he would omit several minor MS. corrections in the text, but which do not appear on the margin. If the ink emendations be proved modern, they must stand or fall by their own intrinsic merits. They cannot fall by the admitted and undoubtedly curious presence of the numerous pencillings scattered throughout the Folio.

To understand numerous passages of Shakespeare which many modern editors have not scrupled to distort or give at a guess their own meaning to,—called "lopping or stretching an author,"—it is indispensably necessary to be well acquainted with Elizabethan Literature. To understand why the text of Shakespeare is, and probably ever will be, debateable ground, one must not be ignorant of the state of the typographical art in the 17th century,—the general indifference of authors of that period to posthumous fame, if present emolument were attainable,—the licence accorded and assumed by actors,—and the peculiar circumstances attendant on the acting, printing, and publishing of our great dramatist's productions.

As regards the other "forgeries" treated of in the "Inquiry" one has to take breath before continuing the search for truth. It must have been exciting work—this great detection! Picture to yourself, kind reader, those hours and days (and we wonder how many sleepless nights) when Mr. Hamilton ran in hot haste, to and fro, from Great Russell Street to the State Paper Office, Bridgewater House, &c., crying out from Dan to Beersheba "All is forgery!"

Suspicion alights on everything touched by Mr. Collier. Were Mr. Collier to find another MS. connected with Shakespeare tomorrow, and print it, it would be "pounced upon," and, ere the sun had set, would have been "pronounced upon." The astronomer thought he had discovered a new and wonderful creature in the moon: but he afterwards found it was only a dead fly sticking to the glass. The game indeed is a fine and a fast one: *acquirit vires eundo*. "It is a shame in such a tempest to have but one anchor." They *shall* be forgeries,—*per fas et nefas*. They are all in the same handwriting—all exhibit the same characteristics—same excellences of imperfection, &c., &c. The public, aghast, entranced, surprised, ravished and shocked by turns, cry out, Is there no panacea for this contagious disease of suspicion? "Is there no balm in Britain? is there no physician there?" But the race is not always to the swift.¹

Lord Ellesmere's letter is indeed a summary check to the fun. It knocks over one of the nine-pins; Mr. Lemon's reply, let his antagonists say what they may, shakes, if it overthrow not, another: and Dr. Wellesley's, though somewhat vague, was a succour Mr. Collier could little have expected. It is true some of the pins they have attempted to set up again; Mr. Parry even admits "he may be wrong" (Inquiry, p. 155), and actually the only formidable one left is the letter in the Dulwich Gallery. The poor thing! it has undergone much wear and tear; even when Mr. Collier touched it some years ago it crumbled away: Mr. Hamilton can indeed make the "head of it," and tries hard to make "the tail." But the tail, in fact, is gone; it is as a tale twice told: and speculations and facsimiles are comparatively of but little use now. Examination of the spots of corrosion eaten into the paper and ink suggest other thoughts; they prove its antiquity, if not its genuineness. They prove

¹ By the bye, who is Mr. Douglas Hamilton? On the authority of the Athenæum and other papers we learn that "Mr. Douglas Hamilton has found in the State Paper Office some hitherto unnoticed facts in the Life of Milton." Now if Mr. Douglas be no relation to the celebrated Mr. N. E. S. A., I would warn him that he had better not find any more: he will be pounced and pronounced upon in the twinkling of an eye. Let the Camden Society see to it.

at least that the hands of Mr. Collier had nothing to do with its manufacture. Indeed no one supposes Mr. Collier to have forged this: at most they can say he has misread or miscopied. "It is possible," says a Reviewer, "that he may satisfy the world that this has been his only offence," (Critic, March 3, 1860,) and the Reviewer in Fraser now echoes the sentiment that "he is entitled to the English verdict of *Not Guilty*" (May, 1860, p. 738); admissions which could scarcely have been wrung six months ago.

Against Mr. Collier, then, the case has signally failed; and it would hardly be a matter of surprise if Mr. Hamilton had reasons for regretting that, under perhaps *magni nominis umbra*, he has been led to stake the reputation of the candour of the MS. Department of the British Museum to his own cost. Oblivious—while the delirium of accomplishing something *extra-ordinary* lasted—he may live to rue the day that transformed the precincts of the British Museum into a house of coral, himself the polypus. Comets are grand things, though eccentric in their aberrations: *ignes fatui* shine for an instant, and are extinguished for ever. If Mr. Hamilton only appear a spark to us, he may possibly, being so far beyond and above us, prove to be a sun.

Having then reviewed the fourteen facsimiles appended to the "Inquiry," I leave it to the reader to consider whether my suggestions are impossibilities: if they are not, I have as much reason in absence of all proof—except the opinions and *ipse dixit*—of a few who think to frighten us with their dignified names—to question the reasons for asserting on external grounds the spuriousness of the MS. emendations. Nor can the weight of all the literary or official authority that may be pitted against us silence the expressions of unbounded surprise and indignation, which all lovers of fair play who have watched the unequal contest must feel towards those who would asperse, on such slight foundation, the fair fame and name of a literary gentleman.

But as regards the Folio itself, we have not done with it. We

want more information. Is there anything—the name of Thomas Perkins for instance—written on the fly-leaf Mr. Parry has discovered to belong to his lost folio? is it anything to do with the fly-leaf mentioned by Mr. Warner (Fraser, May, p. 751, note) which was in his folio he says he sold to Mr. Rodd in 1846? and why did Mr. Rodd sell for 30s. what he bought for £5.?

The literary part of the question I have but slightly touched upon. The hundreds of estimable suggestions the Folio contains, common sense will in time doubtless appreciate. Some of our best Shakesperian authorities have not only introduced several of the emendations into their own text, but one, who entertains, according to his own *dictum*, no exaggerated notions of Mr. Collier's editorial abilities, has pronounced many "so admirable that they can hardly be conjectural." Mr. Hamilton's own words are "If the corrections rested on a valid basis, a more signal benefit to literature had seldom been conferred." (Inq. Pref. p. ii.) Mr. Staunton (Shakespeare, Vol. III. 250) assuming the corrections forged, impugns one of them on the ground that the Old Corrector makes "the utterer appear incompetent to appreciate the fine touches of Shakespeare's genius." Now it does not seem that the Old Corrector *was* always alive to the intrinsic beauties of Shakespeare's diction, style, or sentiment: he seems to have intended merely to make sense of various passages notably erroneously printed: but that the utterer should be incompetent to understand "the fine touches of Shakespeare's genius" cannot surely excite any great wonder. Mr. Staunton, however, with much liberality, is willing to admit that some few good readings are to be found in the Perkins folio. If they *were* all forgeries, the "shade of Shakespeare," says Tieck, "must have risen to have forged them." But I would not give them too great praise, which Pope likens to ambergris; "a little whiff of it is agreeable, a good lump knocks you down." But the corrections are there; and as they improve upon many of Shakespeare's much mangled lines (even though he never wrote the originals) it must be admitted "a living dog is better than a dead lion."

I have attempted to speak plainly, for speech was not given us to *disguise* our thoughts, and my reader may be inclined to think some of my suggestions entitled to a temporary consideration: I trust at least they may contribute a quota to the laborious task of penetrating the undoubted mystery that still hangs over the so-called "Perkins Folio."

SCRUTATOR.

T H E E N D .



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